

Outreach Action Plan FFY 2023

Objective:

The Iowa WIC program will implement strategies to promote the WIC Participant Portal during fiscal year 2023. Information about the Portal will be shared with community partners who can promote and refer WIC eligible clients directly to the Portal, or help them apply for WIC on the spot through this tool. Iowa WIC will also encourage local WIC agencies to advertise the Portal to current WIC participants. Through these initiatives, we hope to increase WIC participation and program retention.

Purpose Statement:

The National WIC Association's 2022 State of WIC Report says, "Frontline innovation during COVID-19 has set the stage for a new era of WIC service delivery that can resolve long standing barriers to access and continued participation (1)." The report goes on to say that technologies like participant portals, online applications, and chatbots can simplify the application process.

Iowa WIC plans to implement a Participant Portal in January, 2023. The Portal will be a secure web application where individuals may apply for the program, schedule appointments, manage personal information, upload documentation, view food benefits, and communicate with staff.

The rationale for implementing this technology is multifold. Research from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that digital tools in WIC maximize face-to-face time in the clinic, illustrate that WIC is forward thinking and accessible, keep participants engaged with the program, and help overcome barriers such as limited time and transportation (2). The availability of a Participant Portal may especially appeal to WIC-eligible millennial and Gen Z Head of Households. These digital natives make up a growing segment of the WIC population and are more likely to utilize health care portals than previous generations (3).

In order for this new technology to be effective, eligible individuals need to be aware that the Participant Portal is available to them, as well as understand the benefits of using it. By promoting the Participant Portal to local agencies and partners, we hope to inform new and existing participants and ultimately increase participation in WIC.

Works Cited:

1. "The State of WIC: Investing in the Next Generation." *National WIC Association*, 10 Feb. 2022, https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/state-of-wic_2022.pdf
2. Dockray, H. et al. "Launching New Digital Tools for WIC Participants." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 25 Feb. 2019, https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/launching-new-digital-tools-for-wic-participants#_ftnref9.
3. Moore, G. et al. "Practice Matters Generational Learning Preferences." *American Nurse Journal*. Dec. 2021, <https://www.myamericannurse.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/an12-Generational-learning-1201.pdf>.

Action Steps:

1. In November 2022, Iowa WIC will meet with IDPH Marketing to develop appropriate promotional materials for the Participant Portal. This may include handouts, social media posts, and an instructional video for participants and providers.
2. A training presentation on how to use the Participant Portal will be presented to local agency staff by the end of December, 2022. A recording of this will be made available and posted to the WIC Web Portal.
3. Information about the Participant Portal will be shared with State Partners in January 2023. Communication will happen electronically and face to face.
4. Promotional materials will be posted to the Iowa WIC website and Facebook page in January, 2023.
5. Local agencies will be charged with sharing promotional materials with community partners in their service areas throughout 2023.

Evaluation Plan:

1. All action steps will be completed as planned, following the assigned time lines.
2. Number of local agency staff who participate in the live Participant Portal training will be recorded.
3. A list of state partners who receive information about the Participant Portal, and those who agree to promote the application, will be documented.
4. Local agencies will be required to provide hands-on training to at least one community partner on how to use the portal. A state developed survey will be administered to all partners receiving this training. The number of providers who receive training and report feeling comfortable with showing or assisting a WIC-eligible person how to use the technology will be recorded.
5. Reporting capabilities of the Participant Portal will be utilized to track the total number of logins to the Participant Portal and the frequency and dates of member log-ins.

Resources Required:

1. Staff time
2. Iowa WIC Participant Portal
3. Development of a Participant Portal educational handout
4. Development of social media posts

Lead Staff:

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